

# Synthetic Drugs in Iowa: Get the Facts

The use of synthetic cannabinoids and synthetic cathinones is growing in Iowa, putting many teens and young adults at risk. Despite various claims, these products are NOT safe. They can cause extreme anxiety, delusions, prolonged psychotic episodes, violence, suicidal thoughts, vomiting, increased heart rate, seizures and possibly even death. People who use these drugs become a safety risk to others.

**Synthetic Cannabinoids** ("K2, Spice, and Herbal Incense") similar to marijuana, are smoked, and sold at some convenience stores and smoke shops in small re-sealable packages.



**Synthetic Cathinones** ("Bath Salts, Vanilla Sky, Ivory Wave") are a pure white or brown powder and similar to ecstasy, PCP and cocaine and can be injected, snorted, smoked or swallowed. They are sold at some convenience stores and smoke shops, with "not for human consumption" on the package.



While there is much work being done to remove these products from sale; a key to preventing synthetic drug use in Iowa is the education of youth, parents, and communities.

**For additional information about synthetic drugs and other substances, please contact the Partnership @ DrugFreeIowa.org, the Office of Drug Control Policy, or the Iowa Substance Abuse Information Center.**



**24/7 Helpline (866)-242-4111**  
[www.drugfreeinfo.org](http://www.drugfreeinfo.org)

## Synthetic Cannabinoids – More Facts (“K2, Spice, and Herbal Incense”)

- **THC-LIKE** pharmacological properties give them the name “synthetic cannabinoids.” Have been found to have much more severe reactions than THC.
- Many variations of chemical compounds – were primarily developed for research purposes and have not been approved by FDA for human consumption.
- Effects could last as long as 3-5 hours.
- The synthetic chemicals are sprayed on plant material (similar to potpourri) and packaged as “incense.” Looks like oregano or marijuana.
- Marketed as “legal” alternatives to marijuana and are sold over the Internet, in smoke and tobacco shops, convenience stores, and novelty shops.
- Often labeled “not for human consumption” and “does not contain (banned compounds).”
- Chemicals target cannabinoid receptors in the body and brain.
- Physical effects include: Vomiting, Tachycardia, Elevated blood pressure, Seizures, Non-responsiveness, May be addictive.
- Psychological effects include: Agitation, Anxiety, Hallucinations (can be very intense), Panic attacks, Paranoia, Psychotic episodes, and suicidal tendencies.
- Sells for approximately \$15-\$35 per gram.



## Synthetic Cathinones – More Facts (“Bath Salts, Vanilla Sky, Ivory Wave”)

- NOT real bath salts! They are referred to as novelty items, and are labeled “not for human consumption.”
- Also marketed as bath crystals, plant food, and herbal incense.
- Described as a white, tan or brown odorless, powdery substance.
- Compounds are central nervous stimulants.
- Effects are similar to cocaine, methamphetamine, or MDMA. Sometimes called “fake” cocaine or “fake” meth.
- Can be snorted, injected, or eaten.
- Physical Effects: racing heartbeat, extreme elevations of blood pressure, sleeplessness, loss of appetite, strange eye movements, white powder on nostrils or lips.
- Psychological Effects: extreme agitation or anxiety, hallucinations, paranoia, change in personality, depression, aggression or disturbed behavior, delusions, hostility, violence, suicidal thoughts.
- MDPV and mephedrone can cause intense cravings and can lead to binges lasting several days.
- Sold at tobacco shops, convenience stores, gas stations, novelty shops, and truck stops among others; and via the Internet.
- The various brands are sold in 50-milligram to 500-milligram packets. Prices range from \$25 to \$50 per 50-milligram packet.